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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000466

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/29/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)
SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTS TO EXCLUDE NORWAY
FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE D' AFFAIRES JAMES R. MOORE. REASON
S: 1.4(b,d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: On April 24 evening, Foreign Minister Bogollagama summoned the EU and Japanese Ambassadors and Charge to the MFA on short notice. Foreign Secretary Kohona and several other MFA officials also attended. The meeting occurred within hours of a visit to Colombo on April 24 by Indian National Security Adviser Narayanan and Foreign Secretary Menon. A discussion of the Co-Chairs' proposal for a mediated surrender by the LTTE ensued. Charge inquired why the Norwegian Ambassador had not been invited to the meeting. The Foreign Minister replied, "We no longer recognize Norway as a member of the Co-Chairs." Charge and Ambassadors present stated that this "expulsion" was unacceptable and broke off the meeting to seek guidance from capitals. In a side conversation after the meeting, Bogollagama told Charge that if the Co-Chairs felt strongly about the exclusion of Norway, the GSL might reconsider. The Sri Lankan government now appears to be backing off its attempt to exclude Norway from the Co-Chairs, claiming that the question concerned only whether there was still any role for Norway as the facilitator of moribund peace talks. No accounts of the episode have yet reached the press, which may help us to walk the GSL back from its position. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama summoned Charge, the Japanese Ambassador, the chief of the EU delegation in Sri Lanka and the Swedish Charge (representing the Czech EU presidency locally) to the Foreign Ministry on short notice on the evening of April 24. The meeting occurred shortly after the departure from Colombo of Indian National Security Adviser Narayanan and Foreign Secretary Menon. Bogollagama opened by saying that he had spoken earlier that day to the French Foreign Minister and EU Commissioner. He added that Charge had phoned him the same afternoon to brief him on the Co-Chairs' April 23 conference call and the Co-Chairs' desire to work with the government to achieve a mediated surrender by the LTTE. He said he called in the Co-Chair Ambassadors to seek clarification as to how such a process would work. Charge emphasized that the goal was to stop the killing and save civilian lives. He described a process, as discussed in the Co-Chairs' call, whereby the LTTE would lay down its

weapons and its cadres would surrender to a third party, most probably the UN. The GSL would extend amnesty to all but the top leadership and commit to reintegrating the cadres into society. Charge noted that in seeking to gain agreement from the LTTE to such a process, the third party would stress strong international support for the rapid return of IDPs and the need for progress toward a political resolution of the root causes of the conflict.

13. (C) Bogollagama and Foreign Secretary Kohona asked if this would entail "negotiations" with the LTTE. EU Head of Delegation Savage said it would not; it would be a "mediated," not negotiated, surrender. Kohona asked what the role of the third party would be and why the LTTE leadership could not simply surrender to the government and turn arms over to them. Charge explained the LTTE had clearly demonstrated by its actions that it was unwilling to do so. Third party participation was needed as a face-saving, confidence-building measure. Again, the overriding goal was to save civilian lives. Kohona dismissed the role of the third party, since once the LTTE leadership surrendered they would be turned over to the government anyway. Charge replied that missed the point, and that a neutral third party such as the ICRC or UN was critical to induce the LTTE to surrender and hasten the end of the conflict.

14. (C) The Minister and Foreign Secretary then asked if we had an indication that the LTTE would agree to this type of mediated surrender. At this point, Charge inquired whether the Norwegian Ambassador had intentionally not been invited

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to the meeting, to which Bogollagama responded, "We no longer recognize Norway as part of the Co-Chair mechanism." Co-Chair Ambassadors were unanimous in stating that this was unacceptable, that Norway was a key member of the Co-Chair group from the beginning, and remained an integral part of it. Charge stressed that the GSL's position would be viewed in a very negative light by capitals and was a serious matter. The Co-Chair Ambassadors agreed to conclude the meeting and seek guidance from capitals. Afterwards, Bogollagama pulled Charge aside and said, "If you Co-Chairs feel so strongly about Norway, maybe we can reconsider."

15. (C) Charge briefed Norwegian Ambassador Tore Hattrem immediately after the meeting. Hattrem appreciated the Co-Chairs' united position on Norway. He noted that in an interview that appeared on April 24 in the Sinhalese language daily Lankima, Prime Minister Wickremanayake suggested that the GSL was seriously considering breaking diplomatic relations with Norway. Hattrem phoned MFA Director General for Europe and the Americas Kshenuka Senewiratne, who had not seen the interview, but said it did not reflect the position of the government. She undertook to check with the MFA and leadership and call him back. When she did not do so, at day's end Hattrem sent a diplomatic note requesting a meeting with the Foreign Minister. Hattrem told Charge that he met with Bogollagama on April 25, but the two discussed only the significance of the Prime Minister's comments, not the move to exclude Norway from the Co-Chairs.

16. (C) COMMENT: Fortunately, news of the GSL's attempt to expel Norway from the Co-Chairs has yet to leak to the press. This will probably make it easier to get the GSL to reconsider its position. Interventions by A/S Boucher with the Foreign Minister and with Presidential advisor Basil Rajapaksa have been very helpful in impressing on the GSL how serious this would be; the GSL may now choose to re-interpret its move to mean simply that it now sees little scope for Norway to act as facilitator for a moribund peace process. If the news of the GSL's move does leak, Post proposes to answer inquiries as follows: "The Government of Sri Lanka's decision to cease recognition of Norway as a member of the Tokyo Co-Chairs is unacceptable to the United States and the other Co-Chair countries. Norway has played an invaluable role in the search for peace and lasting reconciliation in

Sri Lanka." However, knowing that no mediated surrender can probably occur without Norwegian facilitation, it is Post's assessment that the government has made clear by this action, even if it reverses the decision, that it is unlikely to pursue the option of a mediated surrender.

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